

Samples from **THE MESSAGE**®

Catholic/Ecumenical Edition

BELOVED BIBLICAL PASSAGES IN CONTEMPORARY LANGUAGE

Eugene H. Peterson
with Deuterocanonical Writings by William Griffin

*“This is how much
God loved the world:
He gave his Son,
his one and only Son.
And this is why:
so that no one
need be destroyed;
by believing in him,
anyone can have
a whole and
lasting life.”*

John 3

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Reviews, and More at
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A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

I have loved Rev. Eugene Peterson's fresh, compelling, insightful, challenging, faith-filled translation of the Bible into contemporary idiomatic American English for many years and used it in books that I have written and published myself. My Protestant friends and colleagues know *The Message* well. After all, it has sold over 16 million copies in the last ten years. But my fellow Catholics for the most part have never heard of it, mostly because it did not contain what are called the deuterocanonical books, which are found in every Catholic bible but not in most Protestant ones.

So one day I tracked Eugene down by phone in Montana, where he now resides in retirement with his wife, and told him that if he ever wanted to do a "Catholic" version of *The Message* ACTA Publications would be honored to publish it. It turns out that he and his original publisher, NavPress, were way ahead of me. They had already commissioned Eugene's friend and colleague, Catholic author William Griffin, to translate the books that make up the deuterocanonical books of the Bible into the style and language of *The Message*.

To make a long story short, ACTA Publications became the publisher of the Catholic/Ecumenical edition of *The Message*. Now our job is to convince Catholics and others to try it, because we know that if they do, they will love it just as much as their Protestant brethren.

As Eugene is quick to point out, *The Message* is first and foremost a reader's Bible. That is, it is meant to be read. And what Eugene Peterson and Bill Griffin have done is make the Scriptures come alive again by translating them in a way that people can understand what God is trying to say to us today.

The Message is not meant to be a substitute for your other bible translations. It is supposed to sit next to them by your bed or on your desk or kitchen table, where you can pick it up and simply start reading. We hope it will send you back to your other translations with new insight and curiosity.

This booklet contains a short selection of 15 of the most beloved passages from the Bible. We want you to read them and see if you like them. If you do, perhaps you'll seek out a complete version of *The Message* and continue reading.

Then we will have done our job. To learn more, please go to www.actapublications.com, or give me a call at 800-397-2282. I'd love to know what you think.

Gregory F. Augustine Pierce
President and Publisher,
ACTA Publications
Chicago, Illinois

CREATION Genesis 1: 1-2:4

First this: God created the Heavens and Earth—all you see, all you don't see. Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God's Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.

God spoke: "Light!"

And light appeared.

God saw that light was good

and separated light from dark.

God named the light Day,

he named the dark Night.

It was evening, it was morning—

Day One.

God spoke: "Sky! In the middle of the waters;

separate water from water!"

God made sky.

He separated the water under sky

from the water above sky.

And there it was:

he named sky the Heavens;

it was evening, it was morning—

Day Two.

God spoke: "Separate!

Water-beneath-Heaven, gather into one place;

Land, appear!"

And there it was.

God named the land Earth.

He named the pooled water Ocean.

God saw that it was good.

God spoke: "Earth, green up! Grow all varieties

of seed-bearing plants,

Every sort of fruit-bearing tree."

And there it was.

Earth produced green seed-bearing plants,

all varieties,

And fruit-bearing trees of all sorts.

God saw that it was good.

It was evening, it was morning—

Day Three.

God spoke: "Lights! Come out!

Shine in Heaven's sky!

Separate Day from Night.

Mark seasons and days and years,

Lights in Heaven's sky to give light to Earth."

And there it was.

God made two big lights, the larger

to take charge of Day,

The smaller to be in charge of Night;

and he made the stars.

God placed them in the heavenly sky

to light up Earth

and oversee Day and Night,

to separate light and dark.

God saw that it was good.

It was evening, it was morning—

Day Four.

God spoke: "Swarm, Ocean, with fish and all sea life!

Birds, fly through the sky over Earth!"

God created the huge whales,

all the swarm of life in the waters,

And every kind and species of flying birds.

God saw that it was good.

God blessed them: "Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Ocean!

Birds, reproduce on Earth!"

It was evening, it was morning—

Day Five.

God spoke: "Earth, generate life! Every sort and kind:

cattle and reptiles and wild animals—all kinds."

And there it was:

wild animals of every kind,

Cattle of all kinds, every sort of reptile and bug.

God saw that it was good.

God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image,

make them

reflecting our nature

So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,

the birds in the air, the cattle,

And, yes, Earth itself,

and every animal that moves on the face of Earth."

God created human beings;

he created them godlike,

Reflecting God's nature.

He created them male and female.

God blessed them:

"Prosper! Reproduce! Fill Earth! Take charge!

Be responsible for fish in the sea and birds in the air,

for every living thing that moves

on the face of Earth."

Then God said, "I've given you

every sort of seed-bearing plant on Earth

And every kind of fruit-bearing tree,

given them to you for food.

To all animals and all birds,

everything that moves and breathes,

SAMPLES FROM THE MESSAGE

Catholic/Ecumenical Edition

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with Deuterocanonical Writings by William Griffin

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I give whatever grows out of the ground for food.”
And there it was.
God looked over everything he had made;
it was so good, so very good!
It was evening, it was morning—
Day Six.

Heaven and Earth were finished,
down to the last detail.

By the seventh day
God had finished his work.
On the seventh day
he rested from all his work.
God blessed the seventh day.
He made it a Holy Day
Because on that day he rested from his work,
all the creating God had done.

IN THE BEGINNING John 1:1-7, 9-13

The Word was first,
the Word present to God,
God present to the Word.
The Word was God,
in readiness for God from day one.
Everything was created through him;
nothing—not one thing!—
came into being without him.
What came into existence was Life,
and the Life was Light to live by.
The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness;
the darkness couldn't put it out....
The Life-Light was the real thing:
Every person entering Life
he brings into Light.
He was in the world,
the world was there through him,
and yet the world didn't even notice.
He came to his own people,
but they didn't want him.
But whoever did want him,
who believed he was who he claimed
and would do what he said,
He made to be their true selves,
their child-of-God selves.
These are the God-begotten,
not blood-begotten,
not flesh-begotten,
not sex-begotten.
The Word became flesh and blood,
and moved into the neighborhood.
We saw the glory with our own eyes,
the one-of-a-kind glory,
like Father, like Son,
Generous inside and out,
true from start to finish.

THE MAGNIFICAT Luke 1:46-55

I'm bursting with God-news;
I'm dancing the song of my Savior God.
God took one good look at me, and look what happened—
I'm the most fortunate woman on earth!
What God has done for me will never be forgotten,
the God whose very name is holy,
set apart from all others.
His mercy flows in wave after wave
on those who are in awe before him.
He bared his arm and showed his strength,
scattered the bluffing braggarts.
He knocked tyrants off their high horses,
pulled victims out of the mud.
The starving poor sat down to a banquet;
the callous rich were left out in the cold.
He embraced his chosen child, Israel;
he remembered and piled on the mercies,
piled them high.
It's exactly what he promised,
beginning with Abraham and right up to now.

THE BEATITUDES Matthew 5:1-16

When Jesus saw his ministry drawing huge crowds, he climbed a hillside. Those who were apprenticed to him, the committed, climbed with him. Arriving at a quiet place, he sat down and taught his climbing companions. This is what he said:
“You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.
“You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.
“You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.
“You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.
“You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for.
“You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.
“You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.
“You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.
“Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too

close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even!—for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.

"Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.

THE BEST IS LOVE 1 Corinthians 13

If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate.

If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing.

If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.

Love never gives up.

Love cares more for others than for self.

Love doesn't want what it doesn't have.

Love doesn't strut,

Doesn't have a swelled head,

Doesn't force itself on others,

Isn't always "me first,"

Doesn't fly off the handle,

Doesn't keep score of the sins of others,

Doesn't revel when others grovel,

Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,

Puts up with anything,

Trusts God always,

Always looks for the best,

Never looks back,

But keeps going to the end.

Love never dies. Inspired speech will be over some day; praying in tongues will end; understanding will reach its limit. We know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete. But when the Complete arrives, our incompletes will be canceled.

When I was an infant at my mother's breast, I gurgled and cooed like any infant. When I grew up, I left those infant ways for good.

We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us!

But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS Exodus 20:1-17

God spoke all these words:

"I am God, your God,
who brought you out of the land of Egypt,
out of a life of slavery.

"No other gods, only me.

"No carved gods of any size, shape, or form of anything whatever, whether of things that fly or walk or swim. Don't bow down to them and don't serve them because I am God, your God, and I'm a most jealous God, punishing the children for any sins their parents pass on to them to the third, and yes, even to the fourth generation of those who hate me. But I'm unswervingly loyal to the thousands who love me and keep my commandments.

"No using the name of God, your God, in curses or silly banter; God won't put up with the irreverent use of his name.

"Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Work six days and do everything you need to do. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to God, your God. Don't do any work—not you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your servant, nor your maid, nor your animals, not even the foreign guest visiting in your town. For in six days God made Heaven, Earth, and sea, and everything in them; he rested on the seventh day. Therefore God blessed the Sabbath day; he set it apart as a holy day.

"Honor your father and mother so that you'll live a long time in the land that God, your God, is giving you.

"No murder.

"No adultery.

"No stealing.

"No lies about your neighbor.

"No lusting after your neighbor's house—or wife or servant or maid or ox or donkey. Don't set your heart on anything that is your neighbor's."

THE LOST SON Luke 15:11-32

There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, "Father, I want right now what's coming to me."

So the father divided the property between them. It wasn't long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and dissipated, he wasted everything he had. After he had gone through all his money, there was a bad famine all through that country and he began to hurt. He signed on with a citizen there who assigned him to his fields to slop the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncobs in the pig slop, but no one would give him any.

That brought him to his senses. He said, "All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I'm going back to

my father. I'll say to him, Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son. Take me on as a hired hand." He got right up and went home to his father.

When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: "Father, I've sinned against God, I've sinned before you; I don't deserve to be called your son ever again."

But the father wasn't listening. He was calling to the servants, "Quick. Bring a clean set of clothes and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We're going to feast! We're going to have a wonderful time! My son is here—given up for dead and now alive! Given up for lost and now found!" And they began to have a wonderful time.

All this time his older son was out in the field. When the day's work was done he came in. As he approached the house, he heard the music and dancing. Calling over one of the houseboys, he asked what was going on. He told him, "Your brother came home. Your father has ordered a feast—barbecued beef!—because he has him home safe and sound."

The older brother stalked off in an angry sulk and refused to join in. His father came out and tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. The son said, "Look how many years I've stayed here serving you, never giving you one moment of grief, but have you ever thrown a party for me and my friends? Then this son of yours who has thrown away your money on whores shows up and you go all out with a feast!"

His father said, "Son, you don't understand. You're with me all the time, and everything that is mine is yours—but this is a wonderful time, and we had to celebrate. This brother of yours was dead, and he's alive! He was lost, and he's found!"

LADY WISDOM Wisdom 6:12-24

Lady Wisdom is smartly spoken, impeccably dressed; her door is always open; she's quick to make friends. These last she surprises, addressing them by name; no name tags for her. Those who join the line to meet her don't have long to wait; as the sun rises, there she is, sitting on her porch. You have only to look at her to get the picture; her smile eases tension, lifts depression.

Those who need her the most become her pets; that has resulted in some hilarious encounters, every one of which she treats as providential. Getting to know her is entry-level education; getting to love her is continuing education.

If you truly love her, you'll observe the laws; if you truly observe the laws, you'll enjoy immortality. Immortality brings one closer to God. Therefore, yearning leads to the ultimate kingdom. If you're the type who takes delight in thrones and oval offices, then honor Wisdom; she'll get you where you want to go.

Just who is Wisdom and how did she come to be? I'll tell you. There's no secret about God's arrangements; I'll take her from her birth at the creation and place her in the light of today's knowledge—no fibs, no white lies, no equivocations, no mental reservations! I could keep her history to myself, but I won't; that wouldn't be serving's her best interests. The wiser the world, the safer the population; the wiser the kings, the more stable the kingdoms. To conclude, accept my invitation to meet Wisdom—you've got nothing to lose.

A CHILD IS BORN FOR US Isaiah 9:2-7

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light.
For those who lived in a land of deep shadows—
light! sunbursts of light!
You repopulated the nation,
you expanded its joy.
Oh, they're so glad in your presence!
Festival joy!
The joy of a great celebration,
sharing rich gifts and warm greetings.
The abuse of oppressors and cruelty of tyrants—
all their whips and cudgels and curses—
Is gone, done away with, a deliverance
as surprising and sudden as Gideon's old victory
over Midian.
The boots of all those invading troops,
along with their shirts soaked with innocent blood,
Will be piled in a heap and burned,
a fire that will burn for days!
For a child has been born—for us!
the gift of a son—for us!
He'll take over
the running of the world.
His names will be: Amazing Counselor,
Strong God,
Eternal Father,
Prince of Wholeness.
His ruling authority will grow,
and there'll be no limits to the wholeness he brings.
He'll rule from the historic David throne
over that promised kingdom.
He'll put that kingdom on a firm footing
and keep it going
With fair dealing and right living,
beginning now and lasting always.
The zeal of God-of-the-Angel-Armies
will do all this.

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GOD IS LOVE 1 John 2:2-11

Here's how we can be sure that we know God in the right way: Keep his commandments.

If someone claims, "I know him well!" but doesn't keep his commandments, he's obviously a liar. His life doesn't match his words. But the one who keeps God's word is the person in whom we see God's mature love. This is the only way to be sure we're in God. Anyone who claims to be intimate with God ought to live the same kind of life Jesus lived.

My dear friends, I'm not writing anything new here. This is the oldest commandment in the book, and you've known it from day one. It's always been implicit in the Message you've heard. On the other hand, perhaps it is new, freshly minted as it is in both Christ and you—the darkness on its way out and the True Light already blazing!

Anyone who claims to live in God's light and hates a brother or sister is still in the dark. It's the person who loves brother and sister who dwells in God's light and doesn't block the light from others. But whoever hates is still in the dark, stumbles around in the dark, doesn't know which end is up, blinded by the darkness.

THE SCATTERED SEED Mark 4:1-20

"Listen. What do you make of this? A farmer planted seed. As he scattered the seed, some of it fell on the road and birds ate it. Some fell in the gravel; it sprouted quickly but didn't put down roots, so when the sun came up it withered just as quickly. Some fell in the weeds; as it came up, it was strangled among the weeds and nothing came of it. Some fell on good earth and came up with a flourish, producing a harvest exceeding his wildest dreams.

"Are you listening to this? Really listening?"

When they were off by themselves, those who were close to him, along with the Twelve, asked about the stories. He told them, "You've been given insight into God's kingdom—you know how it works. But to those who can't see it yet, everything comes in stories, creating readiness, nudging them toward receptive insight. These are people—

Whose eyes are open but don't see a thing,
Whose ears are open but don't understand a word,
Who avoid making an about-face and getting forgiven."

He continued, "Do you see how this story works? All my stories work this way.

"The farmer plants the Word. Some people are like the seed that falls on the hardened soil of the road. No sooner do they hear the Word than Satan snatches away what has been planted in them.

"And some are like the seed that lands in the gravel. When they first hear the Word, they respond with great enthusiasm. But there is such shallow soil of character that when the emotions wear off and some difficulty arrives, there is nothing to show for it.

"The seed cast in the weeds represents the ones who hear the kingdom news but are overwhelmed with worries about all the things they have to do and all the things they want to get. The stress strangles what they heard, and nothing comes of it.

"But the seed planted in the good earth represents those who hear the Word, embrace it, and produce a harvest beyond their wildest dreams."

A DESPERATE CALL TO GOD Psalm 22

God, God... my God!

Why did you dump me
miles from nowhere?

Doubled up with pain, I call to God
all the day long. No answer. Nothing.
I keep at it all night, tossing and turning.

And you! Are you indifferent, above it all,
leaning back on the cushions of Israel's praise?
We know you were there for our parents:
they cried for your help and you gave it;
they trusted and lived a good life.

And here I am, a nothing—an earthworm,
something to step on, to squash.

Everyone pokes fun at me;
they make faces at me, they shake their heads:
"Let's see how God handles this one;
since God likes him so much, let him help him!"

And to think you were midwife at my birth,
setting me at my mother's breasts!
When I left the womb you cradled me;
since the moment of birth you've been my God.
Then you moved far away
and trouble moved in next door.
I need a neighbor.

Herds of bulls come at me,
the raging bulls stampede,
Horns lowered, nostrils flaring,
like a herd of buffalo on the move.

I'm a bucket kicked over and spilled,
every joint in my body has been pulled apart.

My heart is a blob
of melted wax in my gut.

I'm dry as a bone,
my tongue black and swollen.

They have laid me out for burial
in the dirt.

Now packs of wild dogs come at me;
thugs gang up on me.

They pin me down hand and foot,
and lock me in a cage—a bag
Of bones in a cage, stared at
by every passerby.

They take my wallet and the shirt off my back,
and then throw dice for my clothes.

You, God—don't put off my rescue!
Hurry and help me!
Don't let them cut my throat;
don't let those mongrels devour me.
If you don't show up soon,
I'm done for—gored by the bulls,
meat for the lions.

Here's the story I'll tell my friends
when they come to worship,
and punctuate it with Hallelujahs:
Shout Hallelujah, you God-worshippers;
give glory, you sons of Jacob;
adore him, you daughters of Israel.
He has never let you down,
never looked the other way
when you were being kicked around.
He has never wandered off to do his own thing;
he has been right there, listening.

Here in this great gathering for worship
I have discovered this praise-life.
And I'll do what I promised right here
in front of the God-worshippers.
Down-and-outers sit at God's table
and eat their fill.

Everyone on the hunt for God
is here, praising him.
"Live it up, from head to toe.
Don't ever quit!"

From the four corners of the earth
people are coming to their senses,
are running back to God.
Long-lost families
are falling on their faces before him.
God has taken charge;
from now on he has the last word.

All the power-mongers are before him
—worshiping!
All the poor and powerless, too
—worshiping!
Along with those who never got it together
—worshiping!

Our children and their children
will get in on this
As the word is passed along
from parent to child.
Babies not yet conceived
will hear the good news—
that God does what he says.

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A RIGHT TIME FOR EVERYTHING

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

There's an opportune time to do things, a right time for everything on the earth:

A right time for birth and another for death,
A right time to plant and another to reap,
A right time to kill and another to heal,
A right time to destroy and another to construct,
A right time to cry and another to laugh,
A right time to lament and another to cheer,
A right time to make love and another to abstain,
A right time to embrace and another to part,
A right time to search and another to count your losses,
A right time to hold on and another to let go,
A right time to rip out and another to mend,
A right time to shut up and another to speak up,
A right time to love and another to hate,
A right time to wage war and another to make peace.

A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH

Revelation 21:1-7

I saw Heaven and earth new-created. Gone the first Heaven, gone the first earth, gone the sea.

I saw Holy Jerusalem, new-created, descending resplendent out of Heaven, as ready for God as a bride for her husband.

I heard a voice thunder from the Throne: "Look! Look! God has moved into the neighborhood, making his home with men and women! They're his people, he's their God. He'll wipe every tear from their eyes. Death is gone for good—tears gone, crying gone, pain gone—all the first order of things gone." The Enthroned continued, "Look! I'm making everything new. Write it all down—each word dependable and accurate."

Then he said, "It's happened. I'm A to Z. I'm the Beginning, I'm the Conclusion. From Water-of-Life Well I give freely to the thirsty. Conquerors inherit all this. I'll be God to them, they'll be sons and daughters to me."

PETER SPEAKS UP Acts 2:14-28

Peter stood up and, backed by the other eleven, spoke out with bold urgency: "Fellow Jews, all of you who are visiting Jerusalem, listen carefully and get this story straight. These people aren't drunk as some of you suspect. They haven't had time to get drunk—it's only nine o'clock in the morning. This is what the prophet Joel announced would happen:

'In the Last Days,' God says,
'I will pour out my Spirit
on every kind of people:
Your sons will prophesy,

also your daughters;
 Your young men will see visions,
 your old men dream dreams.
 When the time comes,
 I'll pour out my Spirit
 On those who serve me, men and women both,
 and they'll prophesy.
 I'll set wonders in the sky above
 and signs on the earth below,
 Blood and fire and billowing smoke,
 the sun turning black and the moon blood-red,
 Before the Day of the Lord arrives,
 the Day tremendous and marvelous;
 And whoever calls out for help
 to me, God, will be saved.'

"Fellow Israelites, listen carefully to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man thoroughly accredited by God to you—the miracles and wonders and signs that God did through him are common knowledge—this Jesus, following the deliberate and well-thought-out plan of God, was betrayed by men who took the law into their own hands, and was handed over to you. And you pinned him to a cross and killed him. But God untied the death ropes and raised him up. Death was no match for him. David said it all:

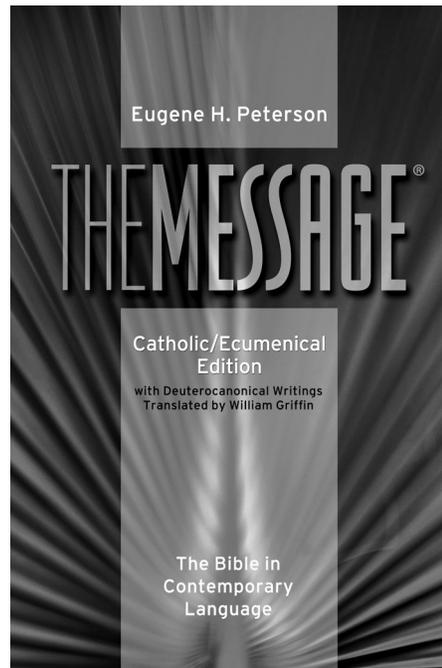
'I saw God before me for all time.
 Nothing can shake me; he's right by my side.
 I'm glad from the inside out, ecstatic;
 I've pitched my tent in the land of hope.
 I know you'll never dump me in Hades;
 I'll never even smell the stench of death.
 You've got my feet on the life-path,
 with your face shining sun-joy all around.'"

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